

SPECIFIC REGULATIONS OF THE PHD PROGRAMME IN BIOMEDICINE

The PhD Program in Biomedicine is currently bound to the Spanish Royal Decree (RD) 99/2011 that follows the guidelines for doctoral studies of the European Higher Education Area; see <https://www.boe.es/buscar/doc.php?id=BOE-A-2011-2541>. To implement the requirements of the RD99/2011, the Board of Governors of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) released two regulations. More specifically, the Academic Regulations for Doctorate Courses released on June 20th, 2012 (see http://www.upf.edu/organitzacio/en/normativa/upf/normativa/doctorate/academ_rd_99_2011.html), and the Regulations of the Doctoral School released on March 13th, 2013 (see https://www.upf.edu/organitzacio/en/normativa/upf/docencia/estudis-oficials/escola_doctorat.html).

The PhD Programme in Biomedicine must comply with the Spanish RD 99/2011, the UPF Doctoral School regulations and the UPF academic regulations for doctoral studies. However, these regulations also confer regulatory authority to PhD programmes on different aspects. This document describes the specific regulations of the PhD Programme in Biomedicine on those aspects, agreed by the academic committee (AC), and more concretely:

1. Contents of a doctoral thesis.
2. Time extensions to deposit a doctoral thesis.
3. Special award.
4. Part-time regime of doctoral studies.
5. Temporary breaks

In case that a particular interpretation of any of these specific regulations collides with regulations from the Academic Regulations for Doctorate Courses at the UPF, from the UPF Doctoral School or from the RD 99/2011, higher regulations always overrule the more specific ones.

1. CONTENTS OF A DOCTORAL THESIS

The UPF Academic Regulations for Doctorate Courses establish in their Article 11 the following requirements:

- The doctoral thesis must consist of an original piece of research in one of the research lines of the doctoral programme.
- The doctoral thesis may consist of a series of articles obtained from the doctoral student's own research. In this case, the thesis must include a report presenting the thesis defended, with an introductory chapter and some final conclusions.

To fulfil these requirements and meet the standards and specificities of this doctoral programme, the AC requires that the submitted doctoral thesis meets the following **additional** requirements.

A doctoral thesis may be submitted in one of the following two formats:

- A classical thesis book, consisting of chapters written in a cohesive way. Next to the original research described in the thesis, the rest of the contents cannot be made out of copying & pasting from other sources, and especially not from other PhD theses.
- A set of articles preceded by an introductory chapter and followed by a discussion and conclusions chapter or chapters. We discourage the submission of a set of articles where all of them are manuscripts in preparation because, as unfinished work, they often contain errors and lack coherence. If they are not published at the time of submission, we encourage depositing them in a preprint server such as arXiv (<http://arxiv.org>) or bioRxiv (<http://biorxiv.org>) and including the preprint citation reference in the thesis. With respect to the set of articles included:
 - a) There cannot be two doctoral theses from two different doctoral students including the same set of articles.
 - b) An article with two or more joint first authors can be used in more than one thesis as long as each PhD student has made a major research contribution on this article. This specific major contribution of each PhD student in the article must be described in the manuscript of the doctoral thesis.
 - c) A doctoral thesis must include one or more original research contributions. While review articles are a valuable exercise of synthesis of a research field or problem, and can be included in the thesis as additional thesis material, they do not qualify as original research contributions.

2. TIME EXTENSIONS TO DEPOSIT THE DOCTORAL THESIS

The UPF Academic Regulations for Doctorate Courses establish in their Article 11 that doctoral theses must be submitted to the doctoral programme, also referred to as *deposited*, before the end of the third year that the student is full-time enrolled in the doctoral programme, or the end of the fifth year if the student is part-time enrolled.

These regulations also allow the full-time student to apply for a first-time extension of one year, or two years in case of part-time students, which may, under **exceptional circumstances**, be extended a second time for one additional year, according to the regulations established by the doctoral programme itself. This document describes these own regulations of the PhD Programme in Biomedicine, which do not apply to the case that the doctoral student is in a situation of temporary disability, risk during pregnancy, maternity, adoption or foster care, risk during breastfeeding or paternity. In such situations, the deadline for depositing the thesis will be extended for the period of time during which any of those

circumstances take place, and as long as the student informs the programme secretariat about it, without the need to apply for a time extension.

Note that a failure to submit the thesis within the first-time extension, given that the second-time extension has not been granted, or within the second-time extension when it has been granted, will cause the permanent withdrawal from the doctoral programme, according to the requirements of the RD 99/2011.

2.1 First-time extension

During the third doctoral year under full-time regime, or fifth doctoral year under part-time regime, students may apply for a first-time extension to deposit their PhD thesis, by filling up the corresponding application form available at the doctoral programme website. The application must enclose a report by the thesis supervisor giving explicit support to the application and explaining the reasons for this first year extension.

The AC will grant this first-time extension to all applications whose report by the thesis supervisor explicitly supports and justifies the time extension.

2.2 Second-time extension

During the fourth doctoral year under full-time regime, or seventh doctoral year under part-time regime, and under **exceptional circumstances**, students may apply for a second-time extension to deposit their PhD thesis. The students must fill up a corresponding application form available at the doctoral programme website. The application must enclose a report by the thesis supervisor giving explicit support to the application, explaining the reasons for this second-time extension and including a specific work plan with an estimated date by which the student will submit the thesis during the following doctoral year.

The AC will study each application individually and will consider granting this second-time extension only under exceptional circumstances such as:

- Supervened causes unrelated to the scientific project, such as death or severe illness of the thesis supervisor or of a direct relative of the student.
- Supervened causes related to the scientific project but beyond control of the student and thesis supervisor, affecting the scientific project in which the doctoral thesis is developed, such as accidents affecting resources and laboratory equipment, delays in receiving granted research budgets, delays in receiving government permits for animal experimentation.
- A simultaneous change of research group, thesis supervisor and thesis project during the first two years of the doctoral thesis period. The student must have informed the doctoral programme when this change occurred, and this change must have been approved at that time by the AC.

3. SPECIAL AWARD

The UPF Academic Regulations for Doctorate Courses establish in their Article 22 that the AC of a PhD programme may nominate for a Special Award up to one every ten doctoral theses defended during one academic year. The AC will submit these

nominations to the Steering Committee of the UPF Doctoral School, who will make the ultimate decision on granting the Special Award to the nominated doctoral theses. The awarded doctoral theses will be reimbursed for the tax paid in the application for the doctoral degree certificate.

3.1 Evaluating committee and criteria

The candidate doctoral theses eligible for being nominated for the Special Award will be those that were defended along an entire academic year and received from the Examination Board the maximum qualification of Excellent *Cum Laude*, and the unanimous vote to be considered eligible for the Special Award. The AC will form a Special Award Committee (SAC) that will carry out the nomination procedure. The AC will appoint members of the SAC among doctors with accredited research experience, who have not supervised candidate doctoral theses that are eligible for the award, and trying to meet a fair degree of gender balance and representation of research lines among its members. The AC will also designate a president and a secretary of the SAC.

The SAC will decide the evaluating criteria that should revolve around the quality and originality of the research contributions of the doctoral theses.

3.2 Documentation and meeting of the Special Award Committee

The AC will provide to the SAC the documentation that the SAC considers appropriate to evaluate the candidate doctoral theses, such as:

- A copy of each doctoral thesis.
- An abstract of the major research contributions of each doctoral thesis.
- Summary indicators of the research contributions of each doctoral thesis, such as number of published articles derived from the thesis.

The AC may request part of the documentation to the former students who defended the candidate doctoral theses and may discard for further evaluation those theses whose authors do not provide the requested documentation.

The SAC will meet only once to reach a consensus evaluation of the candidate doctoral theses and will decide which ones should be nominated for the Special Award. The AC will provide the requested documentation with sufficient time in advance to be evaluated by the SAC members prior to their meeting. If one or more members of the SAC cannot attend the meeting, they can communicate their evaluation to the president of the SAC, who will share it with the rest of the SAC at the meeting.

3.3 Procedure to evaluate the candidate doctoral theses

At the meeting of the SAC, its members will confidentially share their respective evaluation of the candidate doctoral theses and will attempt to reach a consensus about what doctoral theses should be nominated for the Special Award without exceeding the maximum number of nominations established by the regulations of the UPF Academic Regulations for Doctoral Courses. If the members of the SAC cannot reach such a consensus, then a ranking of the candidate doctoral theses will

be formed on the basis of votes made by the members of the SAC. The president of the SAC will decide what number of the most voted theses, not exceeding the maximum allowed, will be nominated for the Special Award. The SAC will elaborate a justification report that will summarize for each doctoral thesis the research contributions that the SAC has considered for nominating it.

3.4 Ruling of the Special Award Committee and communication of the award

The AC will accept the ruling of the SAC, which will not be open to appeal. The PhD Programme in Biomedicine will submit to the Doctoral School the list of nominated doctoral theses, along with the justification report. Once the Steering Committee makes a decision to grant the Special Award, the PhD Programme in Biomedicine will communicate the decision by email to the awardees and their former thesis supervisors.

4. PART-TIME REGIME OF DOCTORAL STUDIES

The UPF Academic Regulations for Doctorate Courses establish in their Article 4 that the ordinary regime for undertaking doctoral studies is on a full-time basis. However, at the request of the doctoral student, the AC of the doctoral programme may authorize the doctoral student to enrol the PhD programme on a part-time basis, in accordance with the provisions of Article 3 of the RD 99/2011. Because the part-time regime is extraordinary, the AC of the PhD Programme in Biomedicine will allow only a limited number of part-time enrolments and consider only applications of doctoral students under one of the following circumstances:

- a) Students appointed as at least half-time medical doctors in hospitals.
- b) Female students with children under 7 years of age.
- c) Students with disabled children.
- d) Students in charge of dependant ascending line relatives.
- e) Students with disabilities.

Students under one of these circumstances are eligible to apply for part-time enrolment by submitting to the PhD programme secretariat the following documentation:

- Application form for part-time enrolment.
- For case (a) students, copy of the contract with the hospital where they have their appointment. For case (b) students, copy of the family book. For case (c) students, legal accreditation of the disability level of the child. For case (d) students, legal accreditation of being in charge of dependant ascending line relatives. For case (e) students, legal accreditation of their disability level.
- Report by the thesis supervisor giving explicit support to the application and including a work plan that ends with the deposit of the doctoral thesis before the end of the ordinary period for part-time doctoral studies, the 5th doctoral year, as established by the RD 99/2011.

The application can be submitted once the student has been admitted to the PhD programme and no later than the end of the second year of enrolment. Applications submitted after this period will not be considered by the AC.

By the end of the academic year the AC will study the applications submitted before August 1st. More concretely, during the month of September the AC will discard those applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria and will rank the rest by the feasibility of the submitted work plan within the part-time regime. Finally, the AC will select the top-ranked applications according to the number of available places for part-time regime, which will not exceed the 10% of the offered places per year.

When an application is approved, the enrolment of the student will change automatically to part-time and it will not be possible to change it back to full-time. When the application is rejected, if the student was already enrolled in the PhD programme, he/she will remain enrolled as a full-time student. If the student was not yet enrolled, he/she will be able to enrol only as a full-time student.

5. TEMPORARY BREAKS

A temporary break is a period of time in which the doctoral student is unable to conduct doctoral research and shifts the deadline to submit the doctoral thesis by the amount of time taken by the temporary break, within the maximum allowed by doctoral regulations. Article 3.2 of the RD 99/2011, implemented in article 15.2 of the UPF academic doctorate regulations, establishes that the AC may authorise a temporary break for a maximum period of one year, which can be extended to one additional year, under the AC's own criteria on the basis of the student's application and the given justified grounds.

The AC considers the following circumstances as directly eligible for a temporary break:

- a) Sick leave.
- b) Pregnancy risk.
- c) Maternity.
- d) Paternity.
- e) Adoption.
- f) Risk during breastfeeding.

Other eligible circumstances may include those in which the student must help in supervened situations affecting direct relatives such as the severe illness of his/her own parents or children. Professional employment activities are not eligible for a temporary break.